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NEWSRELEASE

February 24 , 2005

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT BOOSTS SUPPORT TO SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRES ***First Funding Increase In 13 Years***

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is providing sexual assault victims with better community supports by increasing funding to sexual assault centres across the province, Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, announced today.

"Sexual assault against women is a crime, and victims have a right to receive timely and sensitive treatment and support in their communities," said Pupatello. "This additional funding for sexual assault centres complements our government's strategy to more effectively address domestic violence issues."

The government's investment of \$1.9 million is the first funding increase to sexual assault centres in 13 years and brings the total investment to \$12.5 million annually. This represents an eight per cent increase to the annual funding for 36 centres in 29 communities across the province. The increase will also achieve equal funding for Francophone centres and improve access to French-language support services.

"For many years, there have been significant disparities in the levels of funding to Francophone centres compared to other centres," said Madeleine Meilleur, Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs. "I am extremely pleased that our government is taking steps to help meet the needs of Francophone women, particularly in the north, where centres provide services over a large geographic area."

Attorney General Michael Bryant added: "Sexual assault devastates the lives of those it touches and has no place in our communities or our homes. With this investment, we are improving access to sexual assault programs and services in communities across the province and sending a message that sexual violence is not tolerated."

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Contacts:

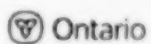
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